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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

Week-end  
reading

22 April 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Cuba a Year Hence\*

CONCLUSIONS

1. Various indications and evidence which have accumulated during the past two months seem to us to form a pattern which permits certain tentative conclusions to be drawn respecting trends in Soviet-Cuban relations and in Soviet intentions respecting Cuba. It now appears that the Castro regime and the USSR have overcome for the most part the difficulties in their relations resulting from the October missile crisis and have managed to devise a common policy aimed primarily at easing tensions over Cuba in order to be able to consolidate the present regime. They probably intend to continue this policy until they are

\* A National Intelligence Estimate on the Cuban situation and prospects is now scheduled for USIB consideration in May.

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satisfied that Cuba can again be used as a Communist base for forward action without excessive risk.

2. The USSR has evidently decided to supply sufficient economic aid to sustain the Cuban economy at about the current level, and will probably train Cubans in the operation of the Soviet military equipment now in Cuba under Soviet control. It seems likely to us that a year hence most of this equipment, except perhaps for the SAM system, will have been turned over to the Cubans, and the Soviet military presence in Cuba will probably have been further reduced. Such a development would tend to improve considerably the Cuban and the Soviet image in Latin America, though it could not completely offset all the adverse effects of the missile crisis. For the time being, Castro, perhaps on Soviet persuasion, has toned down his inflammatory appeals for violent revolutions throughout Latin America. There is no indication, however, of a basic change in Castro's determination to promote insurgent movements. In his mind Venezuela in particular continues to be a priority target.

3. In our view, if present trends continue, both in the reduction of Soviet forces and the training of Cuban personnel, this would mean that the USSR did not contemplate an attempt to

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reintroduce strategic weapons into Cuba. It is true that the risks of detection would be less than those attending the original operation. The Soviet knowledge of US intelligence sources and methods would make it possible to adopt improved measures of camouflage and deception, and to avoid providing many of the indicators that US intelligence will be relying upon. Thus we cannot altogether rule out an attempt by the Soviets to reintroduce strategic missiles.

4. A year hence (barring Castro's death or some decisive US intervention in the situation) the Castro regime is likely to be more firmly established than ever. The mere passage of time tends to favor Castro as Cubans and others become accustomed to the idea that he is here to stay and as his regime gains in administrative experience and efficiency. The "year of organization" will result in the further development of the FURS, Castro's all-purpose political machine. The Cuban economy will probably not be much better than it is today, but also probably will not be much worse. Castro's prestige will have been enhanced by the acquisition of advanced weapon systems, and by the consequent demonstration of his "independence."

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Military Relations

5. There are several indications that the Soviets and Cubans have resolved some questions relating to the weapons systems still under Soviet control. For example, one report from a high level Cuban military leader states that agreement was reached in mid-February to turn over the SAM system as Cuban personnel became proficient in its operation. Other Cuban officials are reported to have implied that a substantial Soviet withdrawal would gradually be made as training of Cubans was completed. In his speeches of 22 February and 13 March Castro also seemed to forecast Cuban control of all the modern weapons. Moreover, there are increasing indications that Cubans have begun or will begin shortly to train for the operation of the weapons systems still held by the Soviets. The absence of critical comments on Soviet policy in Castro's recent speeches, and his agreement to visit the USSR, suggest that he is probably satisfied with the resolution of various outstanding questions with Moscow.

6. These indications suggest to us that the Soviets have probably promised to begin training programs for Cubans and eventually to turn over the SAM system and other Soviet

controlled weapons, thereby substantially strengthening Castro's defensive capabilities. This is not to say that all Soviet military personnel will be withdrawn from Cuba; indeed, it is highly likely that the Soviets will maintain some sort of a military presence there. In addition, the new Soviet economic commitments may have had a bearing on Castro's acceptance of the reduction of Soviet forces. These economic negotiations began in December and were not completed until early February, shortly before the USSR informed the US that "several thousand" Soviet troops would be withdrawn from Cuba.

7. In the transfer of weapons to Cuban control, the SAM system poses special dangers. Soviet inaction against US overflights must be a highly sensitive issue with the Cubans. We think it likely that the Soviets will be very reluctant to complete the turnover of the SAMs before they have attempted to resolve the question of US overflights. They may try to obtain assurances from Castro that he will not shoot down a US plane. But they cannot rely merely on Castro's assurances, and it is likely that they will delay the transfer of final control, hoping that in an eventually calmer atmosphere the US might desist from overflights. It is possible that they might announce

in advance an intended turnover to Cuba and use the interim period to seek a termination of overflights either through some agreement with the US or some dramatic action at the UN, claiming that the reduction in Soviet forces had removed any pretext for US surveillance.

8. Nevertheless, if US aerial surveillance was continued it would still be a major deterrent to any future Soviet attempts to reintroduce strategic weapons into Cuba. Even if surveillance was discontinued as a regular practice, we believe that the Soviets would not be able to have any solid assurance that they could introduce major weapons into Cuba without detection. We have no evidence that Khrushchev has reappraised the risks of US counteraction to such a venture, and we think that his experience of last October has considerably reduced the chances of a second dangerous misjudgment. Furthermore, we doubt that Castro would be willing to cooperate in another such attempt.

9. Various other measures of increasing the military strength in Cuba are possible. For example, the Soviets might provide Castro with submarines, or use Cuban ports for their own submarines. They might calculate that such moves would not confront the US with such a clear and unmistakably immediate challenge as produced the strong reaction of last October. At some point, they might even attempt to supply Castro with light bombers, but in this case they would almost certainly recognize the great risks of US counteraction.

Current Tactics

10. If the Cubans and Soviets have settled some of their problems, this was probably the result of a more basic agreement on how to deal with the US. They have probably agreed that the situation calls for steps to reduce the constant threat of a crisis. The recent withdrawal of at least some 4,600 Soviet personnel serves this purpose. In deciding on a course of action the Soviets and Cubans may have been also impressed with the arguments of President Goulart, among others, that the Soviet forces detract from Castro's "independence" and look more like a Soviet occupation. At the same time, however, the Soviets will maintain a military "presence" as an earnest of their commitment to protect Cuba and as a "trip wire" deterrent against a US invasion.

11. In any case, the Soviets probably have convinced Castro that time can be made to work in Cuba's favor, providing the US is not presented with a pretext for direct intervention or drastic measures such as some form of quarantine. Moreover, the Soviets have probably argued that the Cubans should concentrate on the solution of important domestic problems in order to assure the existence of the regime, demonstrate that a Communist revolution cannot be reversed by the US, and prepare the base for

future breakthroughs in Latin America. Thus the Soviets probably want a period of calm in the Caribbean. In short, the USSR and Cuba probably intend to play for time, avoid sharp provocations, withhold any unnecessary concessions, repair the damage to their prestige and employ the more flexible tactics in Latin America which prevailed before the crisis.

#### Political Stability

12. All our evidence points to the complete political predominance of Fidel. To a vital extent the elan of the Cuban revolution depends on Castro's charismatic appeal. His personal indispensability has enabled him to surmount both a challenge from old-line Communists in Cuba and a crisis in his relations with Moscow. It also enables him to absorb some economic setbacks without serious risk to his regime. While no serious challenge to his power and control seems likely to emerge for some time, the regime's remarkable dependence on his person points to a major vulnerability.

13. Castro's relations with the Moscow-oriented Communists are still uncertain. Castro is probably still suspicious of their relations with Moscow, but a rumored purge has not yet materialized. Most of the old FGP leaders seem to be retaining their public



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prominence, although only Rafael Rodriguez seems to enjoy Castro's confidence. In present circumstances, it is unlikely that they will attempt to challenge Castro, as they did in early 1962, or that Moscow will want them to. It is more likely that they will work for more power in the apparatus of the new party (PURS) which is coming into being. Castro seems alert to this possibility and the selection of members of the new party reflects some effort to prevent domination by the old PSP leaders. The completion of this party organization should provide Castro with another effective means of control and an important instrument for political indoctrination and exhortation of the populace. But over the longer run the existence of a stable and organized party apparatus could reduce the indispensability both to the Cuban regime and to the Soviets of Castro's personal leadership.

14. Popular attitudes will be a factor affecting the stability of the regime. We have no way of measuring these reliably, but we believe that considerably less than half of the Cuban people now give positive support to Castro, as distinguished from passively accepting his regime. Resistance continues, but it is on a small scale and is ineffective against the regime's security forces. It cannot be either excluded or predicted that larger numbers of people will eventually be willing

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to take the risks of joining or surreptitiously supporting an opposition struggle. Some allowance should be made for Cuban individualism and indiscipline, and for this reason parallels to the effectiveness of security measures in East European Communist states should not be too readily drawn. Should resistance assume a larger magnitude, it might cause disagreement and factionalism within the regime. Ultimately this could lead in turn to a disruption of the security apparatus and the defection of armed elements. In this way, and probably only in this way, a breakdown or significant change in the regime might be brought about. At present, such developments seem unlikely.

#### Economic Prospects

15. Stability might be shaken if the economic situation should deteriorate so greatly and rapidly as to disaffect large elements of the populace, but we do not believe that the Cuban economy is threatened by this sort of deterioration. Prospects are for another difficult year during 1963, with no substantial change for better or for worse. Sugar production, the keystone of the economy, may fall to four million tons or less, compared with 4.8 million tons in 1962 and yield well in excess of 5 million tons in earlier years. However, the decline in the

volume of export will be offset in some degree by the rise in world sugar prices. As for the other sectors of the economy, there may be slight increases in industrial output during 1963 and in nonsugar crop production. Despite the general decline in the economy over the past years, the situation has not become a critical source of weakness for the regime.

16. The Soviet Union continues to demonstrate a willingness to provide Cuba with the assistance necessary to ease the island's current economic deficiencies and to stimulate its long term economic development. In the past year this assistance has included balance of payments relief and consumer goods shipments -- types of aid Moscow normally is extremely reluctant to provide to other countries. The Soviets, however, probably view this emergency assistance as a temporary palliative. They have stressed that Cuba must become self-sufficient in foodstuffs and most consumer goods. Our evidence indicates new commitments by the Bloc to provide substantial import credits; Cuban imports, therefore, will probably be sustained at roughly the 1962 level. While any "showplace" plans for Cuba may now have been shelved, the USSR appears hopeful the island can be set on the road to economic recovery in a few years.

17. The major economic problems are less a question of Soviet support than of inefficient management and ineffective

organization. Unless Castro turns to harsher administrative measures, the problems of worker apathy, absenteeism and non-cooperation will continue to plague the economy. Disappointment with the anticipated economic benefits of the revolution will, in turn, increase discontent and restiveness, but not to a level which would develop into antiregime actions.

18. The longer term prospects for the economy are not clear, since they depend on such factors as more efficient management, worker incentive, and Bloc aid. The Soviets have apparently backed away from some of the more ambitious industrial projects, such as a large steel plant and a petroleum refinery. However, a number of more modest industrial projects are moving ahead. Over the long run, given continuing Bloc aid, there is a good chance that economic conditions will compare favorably with most Latin American countries.

#### Latin American Policies

19. In the Communist view, the Cuban challenge to Latin America depends only secondarily on the claim of economic progress under communism; it is primarily a political threat, on the premise that economic and social conditions demand revolutionary changes,

including an end to US predominance, and that Cuba is the model which will inspire this revolution. This is what Castro had in mind in his speech of 22 February:

"...the virus of revolution is not carried in submarines or ships. It is the ethereal waves of ideas that carry the revolutionary virus...Cuba is the example, Cuba is the idea; the force of Cuba is the force of its revolutionary idea, the force of its example. And how can ideas be isolated?"

20. Castro's more inflammatory exhortations have been muted, at least for the present, and the more orthodox position that "revolution is not for export" has reappeared in his and other Cuban leaders' statements. This reversion to a view more acceptable to Moscow probably reflects in part Castro's profound disillusionment with the revolutionary fervor of Latin American Communists, with the important exception of Venezuela. He probably feels that he has no choice but to bide his time and build up subversive assets for the future, and such a position has probably been strongly urged by Moscow and leading Latin American Communists, e.g. Prestes in Brazil, who fear Castro will upset their own strategies.

23. The outlook is for a mixture of tactics. We believe that during the next phase the Soviets and Cubans, seeking to avoid a crisis with the US, will be careful not to engage in

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flagrant or gross actions which would invite US reprisals or countermeasures. The Soviets will continue with the more traditional efforts at penetration through diplomacy and economic overtures, with Brazil as the principal target. Subversive training and support will, of course, continue in Cuba, probably at an increasing level. But Moscow has not given Castro a free hand to lead the Latin American Communist movement, and the Soviets still have influence in almost all Latin American parties.

22. The outcome of developments in Venezuela will be a key factor in the Soviet-Cuban rivalry for the leadership of the Latin American revolution; if terrorism, sabotage, and guerrilla warfare are successful, then Castro's ideas will be vindicated and the more moderate Communists discredited. On the other hand, if such tactics fail, then Castro's influence will decline. From Fidel's standpoint it is not only a matter of correct tactics, but survival; he apparently is convinced that violence is the only sure way to power and that Cuba cannot survive as an isolated Communist regime without expanding the revolution to the continent.

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23. While we believe that the Soviets and Cubans have come to grips with some of their problems and have probably resolved the more immediate ones, the Cuban situation is clouded by many uncertainties and Soviet-Cuban relations are far from permanently stabilized. Among these uncertainties is the question of US policy. The impact of the Cuban revolution in Latin America has lost much of its force, if only temporarily, because Castro has appeared as a pawn in the struggle between the Great Powers. The Soviets are apparently convinced that this setback can be overcome provided the crisis with the US can be controlled. They probably believe that they possess still some degree of deterrence against direct action by the US to overthrow Castro and that in any case the political inhibition against such a course remains strong. They probably calculate that the continuing reduction of their military presence will further deprive the US of any pretext for direct action. For the most part, they recognize that the US effort to isolate and harass Castro will continue to contain certain dangers, but they probably hope to limit these by careful handling of any incidents. They will also maintain pressure on Castro to avoid provocative actions, arguing that his interest as well as theirs will be best served by gradual consolidation of his regime.

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24. We also foresee varying degrees of fiction in Soviet-Cuban relations, regardless of US policy. They are far from a fundamental reconciliation of their appraisal of the situation in Latin America. Castro wants all the benefits of Soviet economic and military commitments but insists on unique position in the Bloc outside Communist discipline and control. In these circumstances the level of economic aid is likely to be a bone of contention. Further, Castro is probably very resentful of the Soviet policy of tolerating US overflights, and it is unlikely that he will submit to US aerial surveillance indefinitely.

25. For the present, however, we believe that both the Soviets and the Cubans hope to stabilize the situation and gird for a long term effort in Latin America. They have composed their differences in order to concentrate upon building up the Cuban economy and avoiding a crisis with the US. Barring a flareup caused by any of the factors discussed above, we think that any radical change in domestic Cuban trends and Soviet-Cuban relations is unlikely in the near future. In sum, we believe that there is a good chance that Castro's position in Cuba a year from now will be stronger than it presently is and



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that in Latin America, the Communists will have recovered  
some of the ground lost in the missile crisis.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

10/17/44  
(S) SHERMAN KENT  
Chairman

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